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NEWSBYTES

Pay raise approved

WASHINGTON – President Clinton approved a 3.7 percent pay raise for military members when he signed the fiscal 2001 Department of Defense Appropriations Act Aug. 8.

In addition to the pay raise, the \$288 billion bill increases DOD spending from last year by nearly \$20 billion to provide funding for pay, quality of life programs, readiness and weapons modernization.

For the Defense Health Program, the bill also provides full funding for a new pharmacy benefit for military retirees over the age of 65 to ensure comprehensive prescription drug coverage. It establishes the Tricare Senior Pharmacy Program, which guarantees Medicare-eligible retirees and their families access to the DOD's pharmaceutical mail order program and the option to fill prescriptions through regular retail pharmacies.

Additionally, the bill funds training, spare parts, equipment maintenance, base operations and modernization programs such as the F-22 Raptor.

March BAH adjustment

WASHINGTON – Some airmen receiving basic allowance for housing saw an adjustment in their Aug. 15 pay statements as a result of recently approved legislation making the March BAH adjustment retroactive to Jan. 1.

The adjustment was approved for all branches of service including Guard and Reserve.

The January and February entitlements for active-duty members was recomputed in a mass update Aug. 2; however, Guard and Reserve will be notified separately when the Defense Finance and Accounting Service identifies those members due an increase.

Air Force extends childcare hours available to parents

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller
Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON – A smaller Air Force doing more with fewer people, longer duty hours and more frequent temporary assignments were some of the reasons cited by Air Force Services for establishing a program extending the number of childcare hours available to parents.

Since 1999, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., has been the site of a pilot program testing the use of childcare purchased by contract from home-care providers. The extended hours are for use by parents whose jobs require them to occasionally work beyond their average 50-hour-per-week childcare arrangements.

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Six bases are currently testing a program making 40 hours of extended childcare available to parents required to work a limited number of hours overtime. The program will be offered at other bases with a valid need as soon as procedures are established.

Bases to test new symbol

WASHINGTON – Some Air Force bases will soon sport the new Air Force symbol on their entrance gates and water towers.

The move represents the next phase in the service's test of its new symbol. The symbol was introduced earlier this year as part of the Air Force's effort to more effectively tell its story to the public, potential recruits and its own people, said Brig. Gen. Ronald Rand, Air Force director of public affairs.

In March, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan approved testing the symbol only on low-cost, "perishable" applications such as paper products, web sites and civilian clothing such as T-shirts and ballcaps, General Rand said.

"Now we're taking the next step, testing it on base infrastructure. We'll apply the

symbol to gates and water towers at selected bases," he said. The test will apply only to locations approved by the chief of staff.

First in line are Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and McChord AFB, Wash., which will paint their water towers in the next couple of months. Other bases slated to test the symbol on water towers are Langley AFB, Va.; McConnell AFB, Kan.; and Patrick AFB, Fla.

Bases to test the symbol on their entrance gates are: Andrews AFB, Md.; Bolling AFB, D.C.; Lackland AFB; Maxwell AFB, Ala.; Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Yokota AB, Japan; and the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo. Also included in the test is Buckley Air National Guard Base, Colo., which will add the symbol to its gates when it is renamed

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Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the online form at <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>

Due to the number of letters, not all can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered.

Right on the mark

Senior Master Sgt. Niksich's commentary was right on the mark about the new citizens (Aug. 9). I can imagine the inspiration he got by accident along with his parking ticket. Many of us native-born Americans tend to take too much for granted.

Master Sgt. Bill Brockman
Robins AFB, Ga.

Rank, performance

I'd like to echo the positive comments in your article about the recent high promotion rate to the rank of staff sergeant (Aug. 9). Promoting senior airmen earlier is a step long overdue for the Air Force. Having trained several times with the other services, it was frustrating to see soldiers, sailors and Marines who had

served the same time as me (and less time, in many cases) getting promoted to E-5 so quickly while I remained "just an airman." Many of our senior airmen are already well educated by the end of their first enlistment, and they are certainly well versed in the Air Force way of life. So I say as long as they are doing the jobs of NCOs, let's keep giving them the stripes and the pay to go with their performance!

Staff Sgt. Mike Hammond
Tinker AFB, Okla.

Promotion rates

It is always refreshing to see an article in the Air Force Online News that disgusts me. Your article, "High promotion rate equals good news," (Aug. 9) was one such article. While I

agree that decreasing the average time for promotion to E-5 is important, especially given the drastic differences compared to our counterparts in our sister services, what happened this year was a huge mistake. As noted in the article, test scores have plummeted, from an average of 73 in 1998 to an average of 49 this year! ...Surely there are deserving troops being promoted – I know some – but just as surely there are those who need more time before being promoted. A score of 49 won't pass a test in high school; why should it get people promoted in the Air Force? Increase the numbers, but not at the expense of standards and knowledge.

Staff Sgt. Jeremy A Entwistle
Lajes Field, Azores

Frontline supervisor:

Air Force's most vital link

By Chief Master Sgt. Lew Monroe
Air Mobility Command

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.

– Take a look around. Without even straining your eyes, you can see the most intelligent and capable enlisted force in the history of our Air Force. The young airmen enlisting in the Air Force today are head and shoulders above where we were just a short 20 years ago, but one thing still rings true. Just like us, they desire dedicated leadership. That's where our attention turns to the most vital link in the supervisory chain – the frontline supervisor.

With people being the most precious resource in the Air Force, training, supervision and development of those people have to be the No. 1 focus. The responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of our staff sergeants and technical sergeants, the frontline supervisors.

These NCOs spend more time with the airmen than the commanders, chiefs and first sergeants combined. Airmen learn to

trust and confide in the frontline supervisor, and if the situation is ideal, an airman will fully trust the judgment and direction submitted by the frontline supervisor.

For the most part, airmen respond to the direction of unit leadership based on their sense of discipline, responsibility and the fear of consequences for failure to do so. On the other hand, they respond to the direction of the frontline supervisor out of sheer respect and admiration.

Airmen can identify with the frontline supervisor; they can see themselves as a technical or staff sergeant in years to come. Being the frontline supervisor is within their short-term grasp. This is why the frontline supervisor is the most vital link and must realize his or her importance to the team.

As a frontline supervisor, you must be ready to step up. Realize that your every move is being watched by the most impressionable people in the Air Force – our airmen. Understand that you can tell the airmen anything you want to, point them in any direction you wish, but never

forget they will say and do what they see you say and do, no matter what you tell them.

If you come to work in a wrinkled uniform and boots not shined, so will your airmen. If the chief points out that you need a haircut, then your airmen probably need haircuts, too. If you are not emphasizing the stupidity of drinking and driving, then it won't be important to your airmen. You must be involved in every aspect of your troop's life; yes, every facet. If I haven't convinced you that the frontline supervisor is our most vital link, then chew on this parallel:

Our children spend an average of 35 to 40 hours a week with an educator we know very little about. Each of us send our children off to school every day praying the teachers are prepared, equipped and care enough to develop our little ones. Now, think how America has sent you her children. They spend 50 to 60 hours a week under your direct supervision. She is constantly praying that you are prepared, equipped and care enough to develop her children. You are our most vital link!
(Chief Monroe is the 6th Air Refueling Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant.)



Bases to test new symbol

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Buckley AFB and designated an active-duty installation in October.

"This test will allow us to gauge recognition of the symbol in public and high-visibility situations. It will also give us the opportunity to learn the design and technical challenges of applying the symbol to a variety of structures," General Rand said.

Criteria for choosing the test locations included high visibility, cost-effectiveness and chain of command approval. Additionally, officials sought signs and towers that needed painting or were good candidates for other reasons.

"In the case of the water towers, we're incorporating the symbol at bases that were already scheduled to paint their towers," the general said.

"For the base gates, we wanted to test a range of situations. Andrews and Bolling are two highly visible bases in the Washington, D.C. area, which makes it easy for Air Force officials to observe the test. Lackland, Maxwell and the Academy are where Air Force people start their careers, so we can expose them to the symbol from the beginning. Ramstein and Yokota offer us the chance to test the symbol in overseas environments. And with Buckley, the timing was right and it was cost-effective because they're changing their gate anyway when they change the name of the base," General Rand said.

Work is expected to begin on the Lackland and McChord water towers by September. Applying the symbol to base gates will take longer, he said.

The process will begin with site visits by a team from the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence at Brooks AFB, Texas, and Siegelgale, the firm that worked with Air Force leaders to develop the symbol and the Air Force's renewed communication strategy. The team will study the gates at the selected locations, develop appropriate designs and oversee application of the symbol to the gates.

"Our goal is to make sure we paint each water tower and change each gate in a way that is cost effective and consistent," General Rand said. He added the Air Force plans a series of studies to measure the results of the test.

This article is available in its entirety online.

Retention remains AF challenge

By Staff Sgt. K. Fitzgerald Stewart
Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON – Meeting the fiscal 2000 recruiting goal is good news, but keeping those new recruits in Air Force blue is one of the greater challenges facing the service today.

About seven of 10 airmen will make a reenlistment decision between now and 2003. So far this fiscal year, 74 percent of the 41,400 airmen eligible to reenlist have elected to stay with the Air Force family. The rates for fiscal 2000 appear to be on the upswing, with July first-term cumulative rates 4 percent above this time last year.

Additionally, retention rates for second-term and career categories have remained steady so far this year. Air Force reenlistment goals are 55 percent for first-term, 75 percent for second-term and 95 percent for career airmen. But despite these positive trends, Air Force retention rates remain below goals for all three reenlistment categories.

This article is available in its entirety online.



Keeping airmen in the Air Force is one of the greater challenges facing the service. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Joanna E. Reihle)

First class launched for new career assistance advisors

By Tech. Sgt. R.R. Getsy
Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON -- When Master Sgt. Kathleen Gonzales heard about the Air Force's plans to create the new position of career assistance advisor, she knew it was the right job for her.

"I had a longing to try something different in the Air Force," said the superintendent of security forces training and resources at Buckley Air National Guard Base, Colo.

The 15-year veteran said she was contemplating first sergeant duties but then read that the Air Force was creating the CAA position. "It's an excellent way for me to give back to the Air Force for all the great opportunities the Air Force has given me," she said.

The senior NCO is now attending the first CAA training course currently being held at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

"The career assistance advisors will serve a key role in the communication process between base commanders and the troops in the field," noted Senior Master Sgt. Carol

Dockery, superintendent of retention policy at the air staff.

"The CAA will serve as a conduit between commanders and the base populace and will ensure commanders know what's on the minds of their personnel and also that their people are getting the information they need to make informed career decisions," she said.

The Air Force is slated to fill about 78 positions this year and has scheduled two week-long CAA classes in September and October.

Sergeant Dockery said that upon completing the course, new advisors will immediately assume their duties at their bases.

"The advisors will be there to help airmen and NCOs in making career decisions, whether to stay in or to get out," she said. "They will make available a realm of information and advice on benefits, pay, career counseling and also information about Reserve, Guard and civil service opportunities."

This article is available in its entirety online.



Air Force extends childcare hours available to parents

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The program, which was recently extended to five other Air Force installations based on information gathered from the Air Force Community Needs Assessment survey, is designed to decrease parents' concern about how to take care of their children when they must work longer hours.

"The intent of this program is to provide support to families who need care beyond their regular childcare arrangements," said Dr. Beverly Schmalzried, Air Force Services' chief of family member programs. "Most families have an arrangement that provides care during their regular working hours, but sometimes parents have to work late, or work on Saturdays or go TDY over night, so their regular arrangements won't work. This program gives those parents a second option."

At each of the six bases (MacDill, Lackland, Texas; Malmstrom, Mont.; Cannon, N.M.; Kadena Air Base, Japan; and Spangdahlem AB, Germany), two providers are contracted to provide 40 hours of care. Parents, who must sign up for the program, are required to forecast the number of hours each month they expect to work overtime, whether they use the hours or not. Care may also be available for short-notice requirements. The program is administered by the base Family Child Care staff.

Using appropriated funds, the Air Force has agreed to purchase additional hours from the providers, regardless of use, in order to guarantee the care will be available.

This article is available in its entirety online.

AF holds civilian summit

WASHINGTON — The Air Force recently held a follow-on Civilian Workforce Shaping Summit to finalize a game plan for policy and legislative changes needed to address civilian force sustainment problems.

"Our goal is to design a strategic plan aimed at maintaining a high quality civilian workforce through recruiting, training and development, and retention management," said James Carlock, the Air Force Civilian Workforce Shaping program manager.

Representatives from air staff, major commands and the Air Force Personnel Center attended the two-day summit held last month. The recommendations from the summit will improve the policies and processes involved in how the Air Force hires, trains and retains the civilian force and will support AF Vision 2020, according to Mr. Carlock.

This article is available in its entirety online.

DOD to survey reservists, spouses

WASHINGTON — Between now and November 2000, the Department of Defense is conducting comprehensive satisfaction surveys of military Reserve force people and their spouses for the first time in eight years.

A questionnaire is being mailed to 75,000 Reserve and National Guard members. A different questionnaire is being sent to 43,000 spouses. In a first for the Reserve, recipients are able to return the written questionnaires or respond via the Internet.

"The surveys are an important tool be-

cause, in recent years, the increased use of the National Guard and Reserve has resulted in many of these personnel spending more time away from their families and full-time civilian employment," said Charles L. Cragin, principal deputy assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs). "They also face the real possibility of being called to active duty for extended periods, creating some unique quality-of-life concerns."

This article is available in its entirety online.

Select officers need not lose retirement in lieu of PCS

By Staff Sgt. A.J. Bosker
Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON — A recent change to Air Force policy now corrects a situation in which a small group of officers, with less than 19 years service, could be required to serve involuntarily beyond 20 years total active federal military service or separate from the Air Force, according to Personnel Center officials.

"These officers are now given a third alternative — the option to request a retirement date — if they don't want to incur an active

duty service commitment beyond their 20 years of military service," said Lt. Col. Lernes Hebert, chief of Assignment Procedures, Programs and PCS Budget at the center.

The previous policy dictated that if officers with less than 19 years TAFMS chose not to accept an ADSC beyond their 20-year point, they would be forced to separate before becoming eligible for retirement — a situation in which a small number of officers would find themselves each year.

This article is available in its entirety online.



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